

Powers of U-2 Divorces Wife on Drunk Claim

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MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga. —

Former U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, was granted a divorce here Wednesday after testifying that his wife was an habitual drunk and was "the only person who ever mistreated me" during his two years in a Russian prison.

Mrs. Barbara Gay Powers, 28, countered that imprisonment had left Powers "void of all feeling" except bitterness toward her.

A jury of 12 married men awarded Powers the divorce after deliberating about an hour.

Must Pay \$5,500

Powers, 33, now a Lockheed test pilot and resident of a Burbank (Cal.) apartment house, was ordered to pay \$5,000 to Mrs. Powers and \$500 to her attorney. No provision was made for alimony.

The former spy pilot showed no emotion at the verdict. Mrs. Powers was not in the courtroom.

Powers, during the trial which opened Tuesday, testified that he went as long as 45 days without a letter from his wife while in prison.

The imprisonment started May 1, 1960, after Powers' high-flying U-2 was downed over Russia. He was sentenced to 10 years "deprivation of liberty" for espionage, but was freed 20 months later in a dramatic exchange for Soviet spy Rudolph Abel.

Suit Filed in August

Last August, seven months after his release, Powers filed for divorce from his wife of eight years. He charged her with habitual intoxication and said she frequently "cursed and abused" him.

Powers testified that his wife sent him such "cheap" magazines during his imprisonment that he had to request other reading matter.

He said the scarcity of letters from his wife became a matter of concern to American officials in Moscow and even got the Russians worried.

A Milledgeville police officer, Jimmy Niblett, testified that he arrested Mrs. Powers for "drunk driving" June 22, 1961.

Mrs. Powers, who had filed a countersuit charging Powers with failing to treat her like an average American housewife, testified that she had married "for companionship, love and children, but I didn't have the opportunity for that."

Mrs. Powers, weeping freely, said she didn't know her husband had been making U-2 flights over Russia for the Central Intelligence Agency, and accused him of taking "our future into his hands without my knowledge."

After Powers was captured, she said, "the phone rang constantly and there



DIVORCED—Mrs. Barbara Gay Powers and Francis Gary Powers, the former U-2 pilot. Powers was granted a divorce by a jury in Milledgeville, Ga. UPI Telephotos

were reporters everywhere. I couldn't breathe or sleep. I just shook all the time."

She said when Powers was released "he took all his bitterness out on me." She denied being an excessive drinker.

"All he wants is his money," Mrs. Powers sobbed.

Powers, during four hours on the witness stand, was asked about his patriotism.

He said he had never voted and did not know who was the Vice President during his imprisonment. The confinement, however, "made me appreciate this country quite a bit," he said, "but it didn't make me appreciate my wife."

Asked what he thought of the hardships his wife endured to go to Moscow to be with him at his trial, Powers replied, "Why, I'll bet there were 5,000 people here in Milledgeville who would have enjoyed the trip."